



Installation of New Seats – Visitors to the car park will have noticed the pile of new seats by the toilet block. As we told you last month, two of these have been donated by families in memory of loved ones, one is from the National Trust and two have been paid for by FSW. A local farmer has agreed to transport them to the sites where they are due to be installed but we are awaiting drier weather so that the vehicle does not cause too much damage to the fields en route. More to follow when the seats are all in place.

Toilet block roof repair – Visitors to the car park may have also seen that the roof of the toilet block has been cleaned and all the guttering and facings have been replaced. The building is now looking much smarter and will, hopefully, be more waterproof.

A frog he would a-woooing go! – a story from FSW David Malins

Feb 19th 10.45am - It was raining and Janet & I had been drinking our coffee and watching migration in progress through the window for about half an hour. Three frogs had leaped across our garden (which adjoins Selsdon Wood) and into our pond. They crossed the lawn (not by the easiest more direct route) until they came to a low wall. They then skirted that, climbed a low bank, then hopped into the pond. One frog tried to climb the mossy wall but fell off and had to go round. They moved independently of each other. They made a few hops, then stopped anywhere between 1 minute and about 10, then took another few hops before stopping again. Were they getting their bearings? Later I checked the pond - the small disturbances indicated only 3 frogs.



Feb 20th 10.00am - The weather was warmer and drier and there was pandemonium in the pond. The first 3 had company. There was upheaval - many frogs & spawn (see pic). I was disappointed that I did not take a migrating frog pic., so I decided to try to catch a lone male to re-enact the migration. Whenever I got within sight of the pond they all dived. So I tried standing against the fence holding my net on the edge of the water. After a while they began to pop up but at the slightest twitch of the net – they were gone. So I gave up.



At about 8pm, I took out a flashlight to look at the pond. I could see several frogs lying under the water asleep but by the time I had organised my net and a bucket of water they had gone down into the weeds. All except one 'couple' that were motionless suspended in the water. Which seemed odd but when I netted them – it was a 'ménage à trois'. The second male was clasping the side of the female, which seemed to paralyse her. I tipped them onto the bank and prodded the second male until he let go. The couple then crawled back into the water. I tipped the second male into my bucket and decided to leave him there until morning to cool his ardour.

Feb 21st 10.30am – Dry, bright and cooler. I tipped the frog onto the grass and expected him to rapidly re-enact his migration, so I set my camera for speed. It had been quite cool during the night and the water in the bucket was cold, so he just lay there in a torpor (see pic). Of course, if he was not one of my 3 frogs, he might have originally approached the pond from a different direction, and was just confused. In the end, I took pity on him, and put him back in the pond. Whereupon he immediately dived down under the weeds. The pond was quieter, no doubt due to the lower temperature and fatigued frogs. I also saw a few newts, so they can look forward to 'free-range' tadpole on their menu.

(The pool in Linden Glade is not yet well enough established for frogs to breed – but keep a look out there in the years to come for possible similar happenings.)

Last month's page 2 on Oaks was well received so this month we look at the most common species in the understorey, Hazel.

Hazel in Selsdon Wood

Hazel catkins are the first sign of spring in Selsdon Wood, appearing in February when the trees are bare and the ground is cold (top right 12/2/12). Hazel is widely distributed throughout the wood and the most common shrub in the understory in the southern part of the wood although it is less common in the north.

The long catkins are the male flowers. The tiny, red, female flowers (see right) are difficult to spot but for that reason perhaps more interesting. You will need to look closely. The flowers are wind pollinated and they protrude from the buds before the male catkins on the same bush are ripe to facilitate cross-fertilisation.



The Hazel is subject to coppicing in the eastern border of the wood - along The Wend and Noakes Way. This is done in the winter months on a rotation by contractors to the Council.

Coppicing is a traditional woodland craft and involves cutting a bush or tree back down to its base, which results in the re-growth of straight shoots. This management practice creates a more open habitat benefiting butterflies and nesting birds, which enjoy the mosaic of light and shade. The material cut down is sold as pea sticks, beanpoles, and stakes. Temporary high fences are erected around newly coppiced sections to prevent deer from eating the new shoots and plastic sheaths are used to protect newly planted trees (*whips*).

For many years, the contractor was Rob Sowter who sadly died in 2014. The FSW placed a tribute bench to him beside the coppice strip at the junction of The Wend and Noakes Way. We hope that you will enjoy sitting there to listen to and watch the birds. In the autumn of 2014, a new contractor John Sinclair took over the rotation and in 2016 he switched his work to the opposite (western) side of The Wend and Jake took over on the eastern side. This year's work is now coming to an end and if you wish to purchase poles, pea sticks etc. please contact John directly at jd Sinclair2013@gmail.com or get in touch with FSW through the Contact Us page of the website or email.

Although not yet open, the leaves of the Hazel are quite distinctive, almost round with a toothed edge, a furry texture and pointed tips. The only leaf that is similar is that of the Elm but that has a rougher texture and is uncommon in Selsdon Wood.

The fruit, showing in the early autumn is a round nut, green at first then ripening to brown. This nut is enclosed within a leafy sheath, which is the origin of the Latin name of the Hazel, *corylus*, derived from the Greek 'horys' meaning helmet. The nuts are edible and a favourite food of squirrels and other small rodents.

Take a walk at this time of year to see Hazel catkins everywhere and look closely for the female flowers. In early autumn look out for cobnuts before the squirrels eat them all. Look for signs of nibbling on nuts found on the ground.

